

N^o 19

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

Incorporated SOCIETY

FOR THE

*Propagation of the Gospel in
Foreign Parts;*

AT THEIR

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

N THE

Parish-Church of St. MARY-LE-BOW,

On FRIDAY February 19, 1747,

By the Right Reverend Father in GOD,

SAMUEL Lord Bishop of St. ASAPH.

Lyle

L O N D O N:

Printed by EDWARD OWEN, in *Warwick-Lane*;
And sold by J. ROBERTS, in *Warwick-Lane*; and
A. MILLAR, at *Buchanan's Head* in the *Strand*.

M DCC XLVIII.

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At the Anniversary Meeting of the Society
for the Propagation of the Gospel in
Foreign Parts, in the Vestry-Room of
St. Mary-le-Bow, on Friday the 19th
Day of February, 1747-8,

AGREED, That the Thanks of
the SOCIETY be given to the
Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of
St. Asaph, for his Sermon preached this
Day before the SOCIETY, and that his
Lordship be desired to deliver a Copy
of the same to the SOCIETY to be
Printed.

Philip Beancroft, Secretary.



Printed by E. B. W. in Warwick-Lane;
And sold by J. Roberts, in Warwick-Lane; and
A. Miller, at Bedlam's Head in the Strand.

MDCCLXVIII.



ISAIAH XLIX. 6.

It is a light Thing that thou shouldest be my Servant to raise up the Tribes of Jacob, and to restore the Preserved of Israel : I will also give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my Salvation unto the End of the Earth.



AS the Promise of a Deliverer Gen. iii. from the Dominion of Sin and 15. Satan was at first made to the common Parents of the whole Race of Mankind, by Occasion of the Entrance of Corruption into the World ; so all the Descendants from them should in all Equity seem to have a

Gen.
xxii. 18.

Mal. i.
11.

just Claim to the Benefits of this Deliverance. Accordingly, in Process of Time, when the Promise was made more particularly, and entailed upon the Posterity of *Abraham* by *Isaac*, at the same Time it was accompanied with an ample Declaration, that the Benefits of it were to be communicated to all People of the Earth, *who were to be blessed in it*. And therefore, when the Prophets afterwards speak of the Kingdom of the Messiah, that Great and Divine Person in whom all the Promises of God were consummated, and by whom they were to be conveyed to the World, they are very far from confining it to the narrow Bounds of *Palestine*, or to the small Nation of the *Hebrews*: But they extend it over all Mankind; they give him the *Heathen for his Inheritance*, and the *utmost Parts of the Earth for his Possession*. And amidst all that Rapture with which these holy Men describe the Splendors and Glories of the Messiah's Empire, they very rarely fail expressly mentioning his Gathering the Heathen under his Government, and bringing them to God. For it is by his Means, (as the Prophet *Malachi* foretells) that *from the rising of the Sun to the going down of the same, God's Name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every Place Incense shall be offered to his Name, and a pure offering*. And in the 42d Chapter of this Prophecy of *Isaiah*, our Prophet does in the Person

Person of God declare of *his Servant whom he upholds, of his Elect in whom his Soul delights*, that is (as the ancient Paraphrast on this Text expresses it, and the most learned Rabbies note) of the Messiah, That *he shall bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles, and the Isles shall wait for his Law*: and that as he shall be given as a Covenant to the People of Israel, so he shall be for a Light to the Gentiles. And in the Words of the Text it is spoken of as a *light Thing*, or a small Part of the Messiah's Office, *to raise up the Tribes of Jacob, and to restore the Preserved of Israel*. His Message was to be of greater Importance and much larger Extent; he was to be given as a Light to the Gentiles, that *he might communicate Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*. All which, as it does sufficiently describe the Kingdom of the Messiah, as founded on teaching and enlightening Men's Understandings, and reducing them to the Love and Obedience of the Law of God, and consequently to be of a Spiritual Nature, and designed for the universal Good of Mankind, Gentiles, as well as Jews; so it does directly overthrow that fond Imagination of the Jews concerning a temporal Kingdom, since it is not easy to imagine, what Benefit it could be to the Gentiles, that a very potent Prince should reign in *Judea*, and thence extend his Empire over all his Neighbours. And it does likewise clearly shew

Is. xlii.
1.-4.-6.

shew the Falseness of that Pretence of modern Infidels, that the whole *Old Testament* concerns only secular Matters, and that the Prophecies in it (if any such there be) refer to the Transactions of the Jews at that Time with their neighbouring Nations; and have nothing to do with such spiritual Affairs, as they have since been applied to; for here we find a great Person promised many Ages before his Appearance in the World, and the End of his Coming described to be Teaching and Illuminating all Nations, and bringing them to God. It being therefore evident, that God did from the Beginning propose to admit the Heathen World to the Benefit of the gracious Dispensation which he made by his Son, he having foretold by all his Prophets, that his Messiah *should be a Light to the Gentiles*, the Messiah himself having declared, when he came into the World, that *he had other Sheep which were not of the Jewish Fold, who should be gathered to him, and that there should be one Fold and one Shepherd*; he having confirmed it by his Apostles, as appears in their Preaching and Writings; and having sent them forth on the merciful Errand of *Enlightening the World*, it may be proper upon this Occasion to consider,

John x.
16.

1st, The Expedience of the Gospel-Revelation for Enlightening human Reason.

2^{dly},

2dly, To vindicate the Justice and Goodness of God, though this Revelation be not as yet universal. And,

3dly, To shew our strong Obligation, earnestly to endeavour at a larger Propagation of it.

1st, Let us consider the Expedience, &c. As there are some solid Principles on which true Religion is built; so the Ignorance, or Want of clear Knowledge of them, must needs be attended either with the utter Destruction of all Religion, or with such Corruptions of it, as will render it vain and useless, or with great Indifference in the Practice of its Duties. These necessary Articles consist—in the Belief of a God and his Providence; — in the Knowledge of moral Duties, and a firm Persuasion that God requires our Observance of them; — in a full Assurance that God is willing to be reconciled to Sinners upon their Repentance and Reformation; and lastly,— in a lively Hope, that the Practice of Holiness will finally be rewarded. And yet, as necessary as these Principles are, it is certain that the Heathen World stood in Want of Instruction with regard to each of them.

For first, The general Knowledge of the One true God was greatly defective.

I will not say, that the Discovery of God's Existence was beyond the Reach of Man's reasoning

Rom. i.
20.

soning Faculties; for St. Paul has determined the quite contrary, affirming, *That the eternal Power and Wisdom of God might be known by the Things which are seen.* Meaning that the external Works of the Creation plainly point out the Being of a Creator. Neither do I say that this Knowledge was never actually attained. For in all Ages and Nations, some wise Men did ever believe the Existence and Providence of one God. But then it was commonly judged a Part of Wisdom to keep this Knowledge as much as possible to themselves. Whatever they thought in their own Breasts, or was made the Subject of private Conversation, a famous Instance at *Athens* in the Person of *Socrates* rendered them extremely cautious how they opposed the established Superstition. Fear of the Populace, or Contempt of them, or some prudential Considerations restrained them from making any Attempts at instructing them. In Fact, they did not endeavour to reform the prevailing Errors. By this Means, they who stood in the greatest Need of Instruction, were left to the Weakness of their own Minds, and the Craft of designing Men, whose Practice it was to impose upon Ignorance by Falshood and Delusion. And thus it happened that the Knowledge of the true God was lost; and Darkness, Superstition and Idolatry spread without Controul.

This

This is enough to shew the Insufficiency of natural Reason, to preserve the Belief of the One Supreme Being, or to restore it when it is lost. For excepting the *Hebrews*, who alone lived under a Revelation, this was the State of all Mankind, as far as History has given us Light into this Matter. And notwithstanding the many Corruptions which from Time to Time broke in upon the *Hebrews*, yet we find the Strength of this Revelation as constantly exerting itself in their Reformation; and at length totally prevailing over Idolatry. And as Christianity has carried this Revelation to the remotest Nations of the Earth; so we see that wherever it has prevailed, it has driven Ignorance and Idolatry before it. And if any who are called Christians seem to be running back into the ancient Idolatry (as is very true concerning the Church of *Rome*, which by their Worship of Pictures and Images and Saints and Angels have restored much the same Kind of Idolatry, though under other Names, which was practised in the Heathen World) they are only those who voluntarily put out their own Eyes, and endeavour to extinguish the Christian Revelation by locking up the Scriptures which so clearly declare against it. And if Men resolve to be blind and ignorant, even the Divine Wisdom cannot enlighten them. But what is it which has driven out

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this

1 Cor. i.
21.

this Ignorance and Darkneſs? What has enlight-
ened the World (ſo far as it is enlightened) but
the Prevalence of the Chriſtian Revelation? We
ſee what the ancient Philoſophy was able to do
formerly, and what ſmall Succeſs it had; it ap-
pears, that by Wiſdom (as the Apoſtle ſays) that
is by Philoſophy, the World knew not God; but
Chriſtianity has performed what the other could
not do. And as thoſe Nations who have not
embrace'd Chriſtianity are ſtill in the old Dark-
neſs, ſo it is plain that nothing keeps up the
Knowledge of God among Chriſtians but this
Revelation. For before its Breaching the true
God was not known; where it is not preached
at this Day the Caſe is the ſame; and if this
Religion were again extinguiſhed, or if the Scrip-
tures which contain this Religion be taken away
by the Prevalence of popiſh Tyranny in any
Nation, How is it poſſible the ſame Effect
ſhould not follow? That is, that Darkneſs and
Ignorance and Idolatry ſhould not return?

2. There is likewiſe great Want of a Revela-
tion, in order to attain the Knowledge of a com-
pleat Rule of Life and Manners, and the Obli-
gation to conform to it. Whatever may be
thought of ſome extraordinary Perſons, who in
different Ages and different Countries have been
able to ſtrike out the great Lines of Duty, it is
certain,

certain, that a perfect System of Morals is no where to be found but in the holy Scriptures.

In some of the most important Points, we find the Learned greatly divided. And in Nations of the clearest and best improved Understandings, the most vicious and cruel Customs were allowed without Restraint. We meet with no settled Agreement, what was the *chief Good of Man*, which in all his Actions he should pursue. And without the Knowledge of this, Morality has no Foundation, and is directed to no End. And amidst all this Clashing among the Learned, What could be done by the Ignorant and Illiterate? Who could lead them safely through the Subtilties and Niceties of Philosophers?

We see then the defective State of Reason in ancient Days; and as the natural Faculties of the Mind were then in as great Perfection as they are now, we may conclude with great Probability, how uncertain the Principles of Morality would have still remained.

But what if the Philosophers had been able to compile an indisputable System of moral Truths? What Authority could they have shewn to *enforce* their Doctrines for a *Law*? Upon what Foundation was it possible for them to support the universal Practice of Virtue? Conscience has the main Influence upon human Actions; and

nothing can affect that so strongly, as a firm Persuasion, that Morality is the Will of the great God, who *is able to save and to destroy*. This was understood by some of the old Legislators, who found their political Authority not of sufficient Weight to recommend their Laws to general Observance. To supply this Defect they had Recourse to the Gods, and pretended their Assistance and Direction. A plain Indication how necessary a Divine Revelation was then esteemed to ascertain the Duties of Morality, and the true Reason of their Obligation. And if the Gospel had not placed them upon their natural Basis, the Will and Command of God; we have Reason to apprehend that Errors and Uncertainties, Licentiousness and Corruption would still have continued reigning Evils.

3. But there are other Particulars of infinite Importance to the Practice of Morality, of which the Light of Nature can give no Assurance.

As the End of all true Religion is to promote Piety and Virtue in this Life, and our everlasting Happiness in the other; so there are certain Means or Motives conducive to these Ends, which a perfect Religion ought to propose in the clearest Manner.

The first of these is the Certainty of Forgiveness upon sincere Repentance. For as all Men are Sinners, no one could have sufficient

Encouragement

Encouragement to apply himself to God and his Duty, whilst he saw that all Access to the Throne of Grace was blocked up by his Transgressions. And thus when Sin had once entered into the World, what could be expected but its perpetual Continuance? If Amendment were thought of no Moment, who would endeavour to amend? It is very plain, that a lively Hope of Acceptance is one great Inducement to aim at Reformation with Sincerity of Heart. And it cannot be denied, that the Distrust of Forgiveness must, in Proportion to its Degree, slacken Mens Zeal and Endeavours in this good Work.

And yet there is no substantial Proof, from bare Reason or the Light of Nature alone, that Remission will be granted for all Sorts of Sins and Offences upon Repentance and future Obedience; because Obedience is at all Times our Duty. And to imagine that future Obedience will satisfy God for past Transgressions, is to suppose, that God will be satisfied for Sin, without any Satisfaction at all. Just as if I should think, that my Creditor would remit the Debts I have contracted, because I do not continue to enlarge them. What certain Grounds could I have for such Sort of Hope? And yet, such would our Situation be with Regard to God, without the Promises of the Gospel.

How

How then must it stand with the Heathen World? Whatever they might discover of the Being and Attributes of God, yet the Belief of a *Redeemer* was no Part of their Religion. The general Means for appeasing the Displeasure of the Deity, were propitiatory Sacrifices: But Sacrifices, it is plain, are arbitrary Things; of no natural Force in themselves; nor of any Efficacy in any Case farther than as God has ordained them, and declared his Acceptance of them. It is true indeed God may dispense his Favours in what Manner he pleases. And where it appears that he has instituted Sacrifices to be the Conveyance of his Pardon, there, no doubt, Sacrifices may properly be depended upon for this Purpose. But this was not the Case of the Heathen. With them, this Divine Institution was not pretended to. And so we find that the Philosophers derided Sacrifices as a vulgar Superstition. They were willing to have it thought, that as a holy and pure Mind was, above all Things, acceptable to God; so there was no other Means of gaining his Reconciliation but Repentance and Amendment. And yet it is certain that the vulgar Opinion was found at the Bottom, as it proceeded in general upon a Supposition that something else besides Repentance was necessary to reinstate Sinners in the Divine Favour. But what it was, that was farther requisite, no full Evidence could be obtained.

Mankind

Mankind therefore under these Circumstances must have been infinitely uncertain and doubtful of their Acceptance with God. For if Repentance, or Sacrifices, or both of them together, could give no certain Assurance of this ; Nature had nothing farther to suggest. All her Reasoning could not remove Anxieties in this important Matter. Nor could Doubts and Uncertainties ever have been dispelled, had not the Goodness of God interposed, by setting forth his only Son to be *the Propitiation for Sin*, and declaring that *God was in Christ reconciling the World to himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them.* 2 Cor. v. 19.

Here and here alone the Mind of Man may securely rest. Here is proposed a Sacrifice, in which may be found every Condition, requisite to make it a proper Attonement ; and which God himself has assured us, he has accepted. An Assurance, which is of infinite Importance, both for true Satisfaction and the Practice of Virtue ; and an Assurance which never could have been obtained without the Christian Revelation.

4. Another Motive to strict Performance of our Duty, which a perfect Religion ought to propose, is the Promise of Reward in another Life. For what is there that can support Virtue under all the Hardships and Persecutions to which it is here exposed, but a firm Persuasion, that these Sufferings will shortly have an End ; that

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in the mean Time God is Witness of good Mens Conflicts, and will at last comfort and reward them with himself? And yet as necessary as this Assurance is, it can no where be had but from the *New Testament* alone.

It must indeed be confessed that wise and good Men had always some Expectation of a happy Immortality: But as this Hope was very weak, so their Notions, concerning the Manner and State of their future Existence, were exceeding dark and uncertain; proportioned to the Foundation on which their Expectation was built; which seems to have been the obscure Remains of some ancient Tradition concerning this Matter. It does not seem likely, that Men did originally reason themselves into this Hope. For the Belief of a future State was most firmly entertained among those * Nations who were not used to Reasoning, and had but little cultivated their Understandings. And even those great Men, who talk and reason most plausibly about it, do yet confess that they are not satisfied with their own Arguments, and are doubtful concerning the Truth of the Thing itself. And therefore it is that this Hope is so rarely mentioned as an Excitement and Encouragement to Virtue. Whereas with what Force would

* *Populi quos despicit Arctos*

Felices errore suo. Lucan.

this Consideration have been urged, if any Assurance could have been given of its Truth?

The strongest Argument that natural Reason could ever form of a future Reward, is drawn from the unequal Distribution of Things in this Life, and the great Calamities which good Men often suffer even for the Sake of Goodness itself. This has always given some Grounds to hope, that there must be another State, wherein these Inequalities will be set right, and these Hardships be recompenced with proper Degrees of Happiness.

And without doubt the Argument is a reasonable and conclusive Proof, that Virtue suffering in this Life shall be comforted in another. But it seems to fall greatly short of demonstrating the Proportion and Duration of this Reward. For it must be considered, that the greatest Virtue is mixed with many Blemishes and Imperfections, which when placed in the opposite Balance greatly take off from the Weight of the most perfect Goodness, in recommending itself to the Favour of God.

Besides, let the Sufferings of Virtue be ever so great, what Grounds can there be to expect from the Justice of God, that its future Recompence should be *eternal*? One of a shorter Duration will sufficiently satisfy all the just Claims which can be made by the greatest Virtue and the

greatest Sufferings. If a Man be tortured for the whole Term of Life, he is tortured but for a little while ; and upon what Footing can he look for Rewards, that are never to have an End ? A Recompence proportioned both in Degree and Continuance, to his Virtue and Sufferings, and the Length of human Life, is all that from the Light of Nature, can be expected by the best Man who ever suffered for the best Cause. And if this be all the future Reward, which Reason alone can offer, it cannot be a perfect one even whilst it lasts : For no State can be perfectly blessed, so long as the End of it is foreseen.

This I think is the best Argument, which natural Reason can produce for the future Reward of Virtue. And yet even this we see falls short ; and the most that can be made of it no Ways comes up to the Promises of the Gospel. Had not therefore our Lord brought Life and Immortality to Light by his Doctrine, and given evident Demonstration of its Truth by his Resurrection from the Dead, no Assurance could ever have been obtained, of that *Fulness of Joy* which good Men may now expect at God's Right-Hand for evermore.

Luke xi.
13.

Lastly, it ought ever to be remembered, that Christianity does assure us, that God himself is always ready to assist all upright and sincere Men by his Holy Spirit which he will bestow upon them.

them. An Encouragement which as the Hea-then World never thought of, so nothing greater can be said for the Honour of Virtue, or the Comfort of Men in the Prosecution of it.

Thus you have seen the great Benefits of the Christian Revelation: What superior Knowledge it imparts of the fundamental Articles of Religion; what Comfort and Satisfaction it affords, what Encouragement to Virtue. But if such are the Advantages of the Gospel, in giving Light to human Reason, some perhaps may be ready to object, Why has not the Providence of God taken Care to communicate the Knowledge of it to every Nation? In Answer to which, I shall proceed in the

2d Place, to vindicate the Justice and Goodness of God, though this Revelation be not as yet universal. *Known unto God, and to God alone, are all his Works and Counsels from the Foundation of the World.* And for this Reason we do not presume to account for every Act of Providence that is the Result of infinite Wisdom. But it is easy to discern, that whatever Advantages God may grant to some particular Nations, this can be no Cause why others should murmur and repine, unless they themselves were in a worse Condition upon this Account. But so far we are certain, that though some Countries should not have been the better for the

Christian Revelation, yet their State is not worse than it was before. The Gospel has laid upon them no new Burden, no new Condemnation. As the Case stood in ancient Days, so it is now. If the Jews alone had the Law, they alone were obliged by it. If the Gentiles knew not the Law, they were not to be judged by it. For whatsoever the Law said, it said only to them

Rom. iii. that were under the Law: And as they who
19. *transgressed the Law, were to be condemned by the*

Rom. ii. *Law, so they who sinned without the Law, were*
12. *to perish without the Law; so likewise the*
Gospel was never intended for a Rule by which they are to be judged who never heard of it. It is a Law to Christians alone, and leaves the Gentiles as they were before, to be judged by the Law of Nature. We see therefore that the Christian Religion imposes no Hardships upon the Gentiles. Nay there is one Circumstance of it, that is calculated for the Advantage of the Heathen World as well as the Christian. The Mediator of the Gospel Covenant has given himself a *Ransom for all*. And God did certainly accept his Interposition for all Mankind; the Mediator having himself taken especial Care to send his Messengers abroad on Purpose to make this Acceptance known to all. But if the gracious Purposes of God in this Dispensation should not be actually made known to every Nation at the same Time; yet
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no People upon Earth, who shall sincerely endeavour, according to the best of their Knowledge, to please God, will be excluded from the Benefit of it.

As to the Laws and Rules of Morality, they have always been the same; equally obliging both to Christians and Gentiles. And though nothing of this Nature has been given to the present Heathens by Revelation, yet still they have the Use of Reason and Conscience, that *Candle of the Lord*, which, if carefully attended to, is a plain Direction so far as it extends. And if in some Instances this Light should not be sufficient, it must at the same Time be granted, that those who have no other Light to walk by, are less blameable, if they mistake their Road and wander from it. Their Conscience cannot in this Case condemn them; nor is there any external Law, by which they can be condemned. And if acting according to *what they have*, be the Rule of their Condemnation or Acceptance, and nothing is expected from them which they have not, they can in Justice claim no more.

It must be allowed that if a Revelation were a Matter of Right, it must of Necessity be universal, and every Nation would have an equal Title to the Advantage of it. But as it is mere Grace and Favour which God may grant or withhold

Rom. ix.
20.

with-hold according to his own good Pleasure, he may make Choice of such particular Nations to bestow it upon, as seems best to himself. What secret Reasons soever God may have for this Conduct, we have no Right to enquire into them, or object against them. And in this Case the Apostle's Reasoning is just and right: That *the Potter has Power over his own Clay, to make one Vessel to Honour and another to Dishonour*. Not (as some have understood the Passage) that God will make some Men happy and others miserable, merely from arbitrary Will, without Regard to their respective Virtues and Vices. But the Meaning is, that God having impartially and largely made Provision for the Good and Welfare of the whole Creation, he may distinguish some Parts of it with extraordinary Privileges and peculiar Honours.

And this Method of God's Proceeding ought to be no more surprizing to us, than his dealing with whole Nations in other Cases; where we see, that his Bounties are bestowed with a very unequal Hand. And yet no one who believed a God, ever made this an Objection against the Justice of his Providence. In the usual Course of his Government, *He putteth down one People and setteth up another*; whilst we cannot ordinarily observe any Reason in the People themselves for such a Conduct. And even originally from
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the Nature of their State and Situation, some Nations seem to be condemned to perpetual Distress and Misery. Inclemency of Climates, unfruitful Soils, unwholesome Airs, are the natural Lot of many of them. And all this is frequently attended with such Dulness of Apprehension, such Darkness of Understanding, and such Barbarity of Life and Manners, as sets them but a small Degree above the Brute Creation. And yet other Parts of the Earth are by Nature blessed with all possible Means of Happiness; with mild and fruitful Seasons; with clearer Faculties and riper Judgment; with social Graces, and all the Refinements of civil Life.

Nor is this Distinction of Favours only to be observed in whole Nations as separate Districts, but is equally visible in the several Natives of each. It is almost superfluous to say, that all Men have not the same Strength and Vigour of Mind and Sublimity of Soul; nor the same natural Abilities of knowing God and their Duty; nor equal Dispositions for governing their Lives according to that Knowledge. And if Men are better fitted to know and to please God, as their Apprehensions are quicker, their Judgment more solid, and their Passions move with a more gentle Course; it is plain that Men have not equal Advantages for recommending themselves to God in their natural State. And though the Faculties
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of the Mind are as surely the Gifts of God, as even Revelation itself; yet no one who believes a Providence at all, accuses God of Partiality for making one Man wiser than another, or for granting him Abilities of being better. Much less has it ever been attempted to disprove the Reality of such unequal Dispensations, as if it were unjust and therefore impossible for God to make them.

If therefore God may equitably make so great a Difference in the Distribution of his natural Gifts; why may he not communicate his Revelations in the same Manner? Why should it be thought more unequal in God, to give some Men and some Nations Abilities and Dispositions for higher Advances in Wisdom and Virtue, by some unusual and extraordinary Means, than it is to do the same in the natural Course of Things? If God may bestow upon the *Athenians* suppose, a Liveliness and Quickness of Parts above other People; why may he not be permitted to enlighten the *Hebrews* by another Way? If he can give to *Socrates* a Diviner Genius and more exquisite Talents than common; why may he not inspire an illiterate *Jew*?

The Sum is this; God has with great Inequality dispensed natural Endowments as well as the Illuminations of his Holy Spirit among Men. But he can never be accused of Partiality or Injustice,

justice, nor be esteemed a hard or *austere Master*, if he expects to reap but in the same Proportion as he has sown. What Grounds can there be for Complaint, if he will not judge his Children and Subjects by any Law which they have not known; but will recompence them according to their Works, in the Station in which he himself has placed them?

But this State of the Case ought by no Means to lessen our Gratitude to God, for the Benefit of that Revelation we enjoy. For though we affirm that God will not condemn those who endeavour to obey him according to the best Light they have; yet as Revelation enlarges that Light, and by giving new Assistances and Encouragements to follow it, raises our Nature to higher Perfection here; so it fits and entitles us to greater and more perfect Degrees of Happiness hereafter. The Sense and Capacity that has been bestowed upon the Brute Creation, is abundantly sufficient for that State, which the wise Creator has allotted to them. And yet, because this may carry them through Life with tolerable Ease and Comfort; surely it will not be said, that the great Additions which are made to Man; the noble Powers of Reason and Conscience; his Knowledge of God and himself, might have been spared, and are not deserving our greatest Praise. And if Revelation carries these Gifts to a more

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exalted Pitch, no doubt but our Thanksgiving for such a gracious Favour ought in Proportion to be enlarged.

Nor can our Gratitude be better expressed than by endeavouring to spread the Benefit of Revelation to the remotest Parts. Which brings me,

3dly, To shew our Obligation earnestly to endeavour at a larger Propagation of it.

I have before shewn the Need the Heathen World stood in of this Revelation, and how useful and proper it is for their Circumstances. Now all Reasonings that shew a Doctrine to be good or necessary, do at the same Time shew that it is fit and proper that it should be made as publick as may be. For this is the Nature of all those Truths which serve for the Direction of Men; they are plainly given to no Purpose if they are not made publick. *Do Men light a Candle and put it under a Bushel? and not on a Candlestick, that it may give Light to all that are in the House?* The Setting up a Light is a sufficient Declaration of the Use it is intended to be put to. And with this View it is that the Apostles, in whose Hands this Light was lodged, are themselves *styled the Light of the World*, all the dark Corners of which they were to illuminate with that Divine Light with which they

Mat. v.
15.

Mat. v.
14.

they were intrusted. The very Delivery therefore of this Doctrine is a sufficient Intimation that it is not to be kept by Men for their own private Speculation or Entertainment ; but is to be diffused to all Men for their Improvement and Instruction.

The Glory of God, the Author and Giver of this Light, does clearly persuade the same Thing. If it be fitting that *the Great God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* should be known and glorified as the bounteous *Rewarder of all them that diligently seek him*, it is highly reasonable we should *set forth the Riches of his Grace and Favour towards all that believe*. If it tends to make him more obeyed and more honoured among Men, the more he is known and believed to be just and holy and merciful, it is very evident that the Preaching and Propagating this Doctrine, wherein he is declared to be so, does most eminently serve for this Purpose. This Doctrine therefore was from the Beginning intended to be universal, and will most certainly be so in God's due Time ; and the blessed Author of it is stiled *a Light to lighten the Gentiles*, and declared to be provided *for Salvation to the Ends* Ifa. xlix. 6. *of the Earth*. In pursuance of which gracious Purpose of God, our Lord when he was about to withdraw his personal Presence from the Earth, solemnly commanded and commissioned

Mark xvi 15. his Apostles to go abroad into all the World, and preach his Gospel to every Creature; and, for

Mat. xxviii 19, 20.

their Encouragement and Support in this arduous Undertaking, promised that he would never leave them nor forsake them, but be present with them and their Successors for ever. Thus commanded and thus animated, the Apostles delayed not to set about this glorious Enterprize, and with an unparalleled Zeal and Integrity persisted in it throughout the whole Course of their Lives, notwithstanding the Opposition and Cruelty of the World and Satan united against them; and with such Success, as plainly shewed the Effect of their Master's Promise of being with them, and which nothing but the Divine Presence could bring to pass: Insomuch as that, in the short Period of human Life, they had so far executed their Lord's Commands, as to occasion the Apostle to say, that *their Sound had gone out into all Lands, and their Words to the Ends of the World.*

Rom. x. 18.

But how industrious soever were the Labourers, the Harvest was too great. The Life of Man was not long enough to go over the whole World. Large Regions therefore were left to the Zeal and Industry of future Labourers in the Lord's Harvest. And it must be owned that few Ages of the Christian Church have passed, wherein some Attempt or other has not been made towards enlarging its Borders, many Provinces

vinces and People having since the Apostles Days embraced the Christian Faith, and are now become eminent Branches of the Catholick Church. Even the remotest Parts of the Earth in the East and West have not been disregarded. The Church of *Rome* have long had a very pompous Mission in *China*, but with what Success, and with what Intent, let their own Brethren among themselves say : When they agree that the Christian Missionaries do so much as preach the true God, * and do not debase the Christian Doctrine to the countenancing the ancient idolatrous Practices and Speculations, we shall then know better what to say to them ; at present the rest of Christendom is too ignorant or too much uninformed of the Truth of their Practices to judge, or pronounce any Thing concerning them with Certainty. Nearer Home, in those Parts of *Asia* where their Practices are better known, their Missions do not seem to be managed with an Apostolical Simplicity. They settle themselves in Nations which are Christians already, and have been so from the Beginning, and under Pretence of converting the Infidels which are among them, their chief Business seems to be, to apply themselves with all their Arts to pervert the Christians themselves from their ancient Faith, and to draw them over to a Subjection to the Pope :
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* Vid. *Navaret's Account of China.*

The Want of which Submission is what they think the greatest Error they find among them, and which they endeavour zealously to eradicate, while the Infidels are very sparingly (if ever) applied to by them. This I think may be truly said concerning their Eastern Missions.

Their Western Missions have been accompanied with such unheard of Cruelties, and Desolations of whole Countries, that it is no Wonder if unconquerable Prejudices have been raised among all who have so much as heard of them. And it is very likely all that attempt to preach the Gospel among them, find these Prejudices strong at the Bottom of their Hearts against receiving it. But I forbear mentioning the several Missions which the Zeal or Ambition of the *Roman* Church has prompted them to send abroad into the Heathen Nations, whether it be sincerely to propagate the Faith of Christ, may be much doubted ; because when the Practices and Policy of their Missionaries come to be clearly understood, they will be enough to give Suspicion at least, that the Intent is not so much to propagate the Faith of Christ, as to enlarge the Dominion of that Church.

But as it has pleased God, by his Blessing on the Commerce and Adventures of the *British* Nation, to open to our Knowledge many large Na-

Nations utterly in their native Rudeness and Barbarity, and quite ignorant of the Doctrine and Name of Christ, the Care of these People is naturally devolved upon the Charity and Piety of us of this Nation. Providence, I say, has consigned them to our Care, *to reduce them from the Errors of their Ways, to bring them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God.* And all the Considerations before-mentioned of the Glory of God, and Charity to the Souls of Men, will oblige us to undertake it. And there is besides to be added another Reflection, *viz.* That if we neglect it they may likely fall into the Hands of Missionaries who are watchful to make a Prey of them, to corrupt them to their Party, and arm them against ourselves; and if all these People are united to our Enemies and turn upon us, who will not dread the Consequence of such an Assault on our own Settlements? Our own Safety therefore should spur us on to list these People in the Service of Christ, and at the same Time engage them to our own Preservation. Worthily therefore is the Society employed, when they labour at the same Time to win over Souls to God, and make Friends and Allies to our native Country.

There is likewise another Branch of the Society's Care, and which naturally falls within their Province, which is providing for the Christian

Christian Instruction of our own Colonies Abroad, and administering Divine Ordinances among them. For if this be neglected, the People will run into Barbarism and a total Unattendance to their Creator ; insomuch that in their Manners there will soon be found but little Difference between those who never heard of Christ at all, and those who have forgot him, and, together with him, all those Precepts which that Divine Teacher delivered to Men. To prevent this Consequence, and to keep them out of this sad State, the Society do not fail, according to their Ability, to send among them a sufficient Number of Pastors and Catechists and Schoolmasters, to minister to their spiritual Wants, to keep up the Face, and (if possible) the Spirit of Religion and Humanity in those Countries ; and particularly to civilize and instruct in the Knowledge of Christianity the rude Minds of the Negroes, who are so usefully employed in our several Colonies. What Effect it has pleased God to give to their Labours is set forth in the Accounts annually published by Order of the Society, which are enough to encourage a good Hope that the Profession of Christianity may prevail more and more in those Countries, and that in Time *the Knowledge of the Lord may replenish the Earth, as the Waters cover the Sea.*

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It must be remembered, that those Parts of the Plantations, which require the Assistance of Missionaries, are by no Means able to maintain them themselves, and fly for Assistance to the Society, who have a certain Revenue indeed, but by no Means adequate even to the certain Expence they are at in Support of the Missionaries, much less to that and the whole incidental Expence they are liable to. As therefore they have been enabled hitherto to carry on their great Undertaking by the voluntary Contributions of such pious Persons, to whom God has given an Ability equal to their Affections; so this must be the constant Resource of the Society, trusting that when the Nature of their Work, and the Command of our Lord to forward it, are duly considered, it will always please God to supply Assistance. Which God grant, &c.

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It must be remembered, that those parts of the Institution, which require the Assistance of the Affluent, are by no Means able to maintain themselves, and by the Assistance to the Society, who have a certain Revenue indeed, but are not able to depend even to the certain Expenses, they are at in support of the Institution, and liable to that and the whole incidental Expenses they are liable to. As therefore they have been enabled hitherto to carry on their great Undertaking by the voluntary Contributions of their Members, to which God has given an Abundance equal to their Afflictions; so this must be the constant Resource of the Society, trusting that when the Nature of their Work, and the Extent of our Lord's forward in his duty, it will always place God to supply. Which God grant.

